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ABSTRACT

Experiences of the Denver public schools serve as a base for a discussion of problems common to large urban school districts. Financial problems in Denver include (1) a moratorium on suburban annexation that prevents increasing the area of taxation, (2) the highest proportion of poverty-level children in the state, (3) special services needed by these disadvantaged children, (4) desegregation orders resulting in an increase in the transportation program, and (5) an employee salary agreement tied to a cost-of-living index. In addition, Denver has become a racial minority school system and enrollment has declined. Steps taken to solve these problems have involved a more aggressive lobbying stature in the state legislature, resulting in recognition that the city does have some special needs. Teachers have voted to give 1 percent of their 5 percent salary increase back to schools to help relieve problems caused by class size, and efforts are being made to make the system so attractive that parents will want to return to the city. (Author/MLF)

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SPEAKERS USUALLY START OFF BY TELLING YOU WHAT AN HONOR IT IS TO BE HERE TO SPEAK. BUT WITH A TOPIC LIKE URBAN EDUCATION PROBLEMS, IT'S A DUBIOUS HONOR TO BE AN AUTHORITY ON THE SUBJECT. ALTHOUGH I'M INTERESTED IN WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR SISTER CITIES, I SPEAK FROM A BASE I KNOW BEST -- THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS. BY NATIONAL STANDARDS WE ARE A BIG CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM, BUT BY OTHER MEASUREMENTS WE HAVE ESCAPED SOME OF THE HARDSHIPS EXPERIENCED BY OTHER DISTRICTS. IT HASN'T BEEN EASY--AND IT'S GETTING TOUGHER ALL THE TIME.

IN DENVER, WE'VE COME TO KNOW THAT IF SOLUTIONS TO BIG CITY PROBLEMS ARE TO BE FOUND, THEY MUST START WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ITSELF. OUT WEST (AND I IMAGINE THE SAME IS TRUE ELSEWHERE), WE STILL HAVE A LEGISLATIVE ATTITUDE OF THE GOOD GUYS VERSUS THE BAD CITY FOLK--A SHEEPHERDER-RANCHER ATMOSPHERE. NATIONAL AND STATE RESCUES OF BIG CITY SCHOOLS ARE RARER THAN PASSENGER PIGEONS. IN DENVER, WE'VE HAD TO STAND ON OUR OWN TWO FEET. MOST OF YOU ARE PROBABLY IN THE SAME POSTURE.

DENVER SITUATION - CHANGED FINANCIAL CONTROL

THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS A TAXING ENTITY SEPARATE FROM CITY GOVERNMENT. YOUR SCHOOL SYSTEM MAY BE DIFFERENT. FIVE YEARS AGO, THE DENVER BOARD OF EDUCATION COULD ASSESS ITS OWN NEEDS, SET DOLLAR REQUIREMENTS, AND ESTABLISH SCHOOL TAXING LEVIES REQUIRED TO MEET THESE NEEDS. THINGS WEREN'T GREAT, BUT THE LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION HAD CONTROL AND WAS ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

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WE STILL ANSWER TO THE PUBLIC, BUT CONTROL OF LOCAL RESOURCES, OF DEFINING AND PROVIDING FOR NEEDS, HAS BEEN GRADUALLY ERODED BY STATE LEGISLATION AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS, NOT TO MENTION ACTIONS OF THE FEDERAL COURTS. I'LL SPEAK TO EACH OF THESE POINTS BRIEFLY.

DENVER'S FINANCIAL BASE ERODED

FOUR YEARS AGO, STATE LEGISLATURE PASSED A STATE SCHOOL FINANCE EQUALIZATION FORMULA WHICH, FOR SOME DISTRICTS, WAS LIKE ROBIN HOOD RIDING THROUGH SHERWOOD FOREST. IT TOOK FROM THE RICH (DENVER) AND GAVE TO THE POOR (THE SUBURBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS). "RICHNESS" OR ABILITY TO PAY WAS DETERMINED BY ASSESSED VALUATION AND NUMBER OF PUPILS. IT SOUNDED FAIR ENOUGH, BUT THERE WAS A "CATCH 22." ALL COUNTIES OF THE STATE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ASSESSING PROPERTY AT THE SAME RATE--30%. THAT JUST WASN'T THE CASE. ASSESSED VALUATION RATES VARIED FROM COUNTY TO COUNTY. THOSE COUNTIES LIKE DENVER WHO ATTEMPTED TO ASSESS PROPERTY BY THE LAW, HAD HIGH ASSESSED VALUATION RESULTING IN LOW STATE ASSISTANCE; COUNTIES UNDER-ASSESSING RECEIVED A DOUBLE REWARD: LOW TAX RATES AND HIGH LEVELS OF STATE AID. ON PAPER IT LOOKED GOOD, BUT TO DENVER IT WAS THE START OF AN ERODED FINANCIAL BASE, A LOSS OF LOCAL DETERMINATION. STATE LAW NOW DETERMINES THE ALLOWABLE LIMIT FOR EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT'S OPERATING BUDGET.

A COLD MATHEMATICAL FORMULA, IMPERSONAL AND BLIND TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF URBAN CHILDREN, HAS BECOME THE YARDSTICK FOR SCHOOL BUDGETS.

THE LEGISLATION DOES PROVIDE TWO APPEAL PROCESSES:

1. A SCHOOL DISTRICT CAN GO BEFORE A STATE REVIEW BOARD AND PLEAD ITS CASE. THIS WE'VE TRIED ANNUALLY AND HAVE BEEN LESS THAN SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS.

2. A SECOND COURSE OF ACTION IS TO PUT THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL DOLLARS NOT ALLOWED BY THE STATE FORMULA TO A VOTE OF THE PUBLIC.

NO NEED TO TELL YOU FELLOW BOARD MEMBERS WHAT WOULD BE THE OUTCOME. NATIONWIDE, THERE IS A TAXPAYER REVOLT. NO, DENVER HASN'T BEEN GOING TO THE VOTERS - - WE TRIED IT ONCE - - THAT WAS ENOUGH.

IN ALL FAIRNESS TO THE LEGISLATORS, I MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THEY DID ESTABLISH AN IMPACTION FACTOR FOR WHICH DENVER QUALIFIED THE FIRST YEAR. THIS HELPED REDUCE TAXES, BUT DIDN'T PUT DOLLARS INTO CLASSROOMS. AFTER THE CARROT WAS TAKEN, NOT DENVER, NOR ANY OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE, QUALIFIED FOR EXTRA ASSISTANCE AGAIN. BUT, FELLOW BOARD MEMBERS, THE FACTOR IS STILL ON THE BOOKS. ALL DENVER WOULD HAVE TO DO IS GO OUT AND RECRUIT TEN OR FIFTEEN THOUSAND POOR KIDS.

DENVER'S ANNEXATION HALTED

NOW, IF YOU THINK THIS HAS BEEN A SAD TALE, WAIT UNTIL I TURN TO CHAPTERS 2, 3 AND 4. WE ALL KNOW THAT TO REMAIN A VIABLE URBAN CENTER OR SCHOOL SYSTEM, WE NEED A SOUND FINANCIAL BASE AND THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH--ANNEXATION. AGAIN, OUR SUBURBAN AND RURAL VOTERS OF COLORADO LOOKED AT THE SPRAWLING GIANT AND DECIDED IT HAD GROWN ENOUGH. A MORATORIUM ON ANNEXATION BY DENVER BECAME LAW. DENVER'S BORDERS WERE SEALED AND WITH THE BORDERS, THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

THE ORATORY WAS MAGNIFICENT, REASONS NUMEROUS, BUT LET ME SHARE A SUSPICION WITH YOU - - DENVER WAS UNDER DESEGREGATION ORDERS - - A DISEASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OUR AFFLUENT NEICHBORS DIDN'T CARE TO CATCH.

A SET PERCENTAGE OF ALLOWABLE BUDGET INCREASE

SCHOOL FINANCE LAW IN COLORADO NOW HAS A SET PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE ALLOWED IN SCHOOL BUDGETS. TO SOME OF YOU, THIS MAY SOUND REASONABLE, BUT A BASIC ASSUMPTION HERE IS THAT ALL CHILDREN IN THE STATE, ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS, HAVE EQUAL FACTORS OPERATING ON BUDGET EXPENSES. URBAN DISTRICTS KNOW THIS JUST ISN'T SO. I'LL GIVE YOU SOME FACTS TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT I MEAN.

URBAN FACTORS THAT COST EXTRA DOLLARS

- DENVER HAS THE GREATEST NUMBER OF TITLE I CHILDREN IN THE STATE - - 25.5% OF ALL OF COLORADO'S POVERTY LEVEL CHILDREN LIVE IN DENVER - - 40% OF THE STATE'S AID FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN FAMILIES.
- DENVER HAS 19,500 TITLE I ELIGIBLE CHILDREN OUT OF AN ENROLLMENT OF 72,000.
- DENVER SERVES 27.9% OF ALL THE FREE LUNCHROOM MEALS IN THE STATE. WE ONLY HAVE 13% OF THE STATE'S CHILDREN.
- DENVER HAS 35% OF THE STATE'S FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND FROM 1974 TO 1975 THE NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS ROSE 26%.

DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN NEED SPECIAL SERVICES IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM. THESE SERVICES COST EXTRA DOLLARS. SUCH FACTORS AFFECT CITY GOVERNMENT BUDGETS TOO. THE CITIES HAVE BECOME THE HAVEN OF THE POOR, UNEMPLOYED, EDUCATIONALLY DEPRISED, THE SICK AND ELDERLY.

THESE CITIZENS MIGRATE TO THE CITY WHILE THE AFFLUENT, MORE HIGHLY EDUCATED RESIDENTS MOVE OUTWARD TO THE SUBURBS. THE SITUATION IN DENVER HASN'T REACHED THE PROPORTIONS OF SOME SISTER CITIES (LOS ANGELES, ST. LOUIS. PHILADELPHIA, NEW YORK, ET AL), BUT THE SIGNS ARE THERE.

THESE ARE NOT CONDITIONS OVER WHICH THE SCHOOLS HAVE CONTROL, BUT YET AFFECT DOLLAR REQUIREMENTS.

NOW, I COULD GO ON AND ON WITH THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF URBAN CENTERS; SUCH A LIST WOULD INCLUDE SUCH FACTORS AS:

- HIGHER PUPIL MOBILITY
- ETHNIC DIVERSITY (I'll SPEAK MORE ON THIS.)
- SCHOOL SECURITY
- EXPANDED SPECIAL EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES--ALL AT A HIGH PER PUPIL COST
- DROPOUT PREVENTION
- HEALTH SERVICES.

LASTLY, DENVER IS UNDER DESEGREGATION ORDERS AND HAS A TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM THAT HAS EXPANDED FROM:

75 BUSES WITH 8,600 PUPIL PASSENGERS IN 1967, TO
344 BUS UNITS AND 30,000 PASSENGERS TODAY.

WHETHER ONE SUPPORTS OR OPPOSES THIS METHOD OF BRINGING ABOUT A DESEGREGATED SCHOOL SYSTEM, IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT COSTS MONEY OTHER DISTRICTS DO NOT EXPERIENCE.

BUT NOW BACK TO COLORADO LAW. ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE ALLOWED A FIXED LEVEL OF BUDGET INCREASE.

ALLOWABLE INCREASES ARE LOWER THAN INFLATION RATES OR MANDATED COST INCREASES FOR SOME DISTRICTS.

FOR DENVER, THE ALLOWABLE INCREASE HAS BEEN LESS THAN THE AREA'S COST-OF-LIVING INCREASES. COSTS ROSE:

-- 7.1% IN 1973
-- 11.5% IN 1974
-- 10.5% IN 1975
-- 5.5% IN 1976.

WITHOUT AN APPEAL TO THE STATE OR VOTERS, DENVER WOULD HAVE BEEN ALLOWED A 1.6% OPERATING BUDGET INCREASE THIS YEAR. IN A TEN-YEAR PERIOD, THE COST-OF-LIVING IN DENVER HAS RISEN 71.6%.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS TIED TO COST-OF-LIVING

THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVED AN EMPLOYEE SALARY AGREEMENT THAT WAS TIED TO A COST-OF-LIVING INDEX. AT THE RATES I JUST DESCRIBED, YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW DOLLAR NEEDS FOR SALARIES GREW. THIS YEAR ALONE, SALARY FACTORS ADDED $7,600,000 TO BUDGET REQUIREMENTS. DENVER'S GENERAL FUND REQUIREMENTS HAVE RISEN FROM $82,000,000 IN 1969 TO $154,000,000 IN 1977.

URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS ARE GENERALLY CHARACTERIZED BY HIGHER SALARY SCHEDULES. THIS RESULTS IN GREATER STAFF LONGEVITY. IN DENVER, THE AVERAGE TEACHER HAS BEEN EMPLOYED THIRTEEN YEARS, THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF LONGEVITY IN THE STATE. THIS IS GOOD FOR URBAN CHILDREN, BUT ROUGH ON SCHOOL BUDGETS.

I THINK YOU CAN SEE THE PROBLEM WHEN ALL DISTRICTS ARE EXPECTED TO OPERATE WITHIN THE SAME REVENUE BASE BUT HAVE VARYING SALARY COMMITMENTS. WHILE THE STATE'S AVERAGE TEACHER EARNS $12,075 ANNUALLY, DENVER'S AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY IS $17,636.

PROUD AS WE ARE OF OUR TEACHER LONGEVITY AND TRAINING, SUCH STATISTICS COST DOLLARS.

BEFORE LEAVING STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION, THE SUBJECT OF MANDATED PROGRAMS DESERVES AT LEAST A COMMENT. I'M SURE EVERY BOARD MEMBER AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR HERE HAS EXPERIENCED THE DILEMMA OF PROVIDING FOR MANDATED PROGRAMS, SPECIAL EDUCATION BEING THE MOST NOTABLE.

MANDATED PROGRAMS - LEVELS OF SUPPORT

ON THE ONE HAND, LEGISLATORS TELL US WE MUST PROVIDE THIS PROGRAM, AND ON THE OTHER HAND, APPROPRIATE INSUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR SUPPORTING SUCH ACTIVITIES. IN COLORADO, FOR EXAMPLE, WE MUST EDUCATE EVERY CHILD---SERIOUSLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED INCLUDED. CHILDREN FORMERLY CARED FOR BY SOCIAL AGENCIES - - LEGISLATORS APPPORIATE WHAT THEY CLAIM IS 80% OF THE COSTS, BUT REIMBURSEMENT TO LOCAL DISTRICTS IS ABOUT 52% OF COSTS. WHERE DO THE EXTRA DOLLARS COME FROM? THE LOCAL BUDGET.

THIS LAST YEAR, WE HAD TO MAKE PROGRAM AND STAFF REDUCTIONS IN ORDER TO MEET INCREASED DOLLAR REQUIREMENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION. WHILE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN REQUIRING SPECIAL SERVICES CONTINUES TO GROW IN OUR CITIES, THE TOTAL PUPIL POPULATION IS DECREASING.

PUPIL DECREASES AND EMPTY SCHOOL ROOMS

WHILE MOST LARGE CITIES ARE EXPERIENCING A DECLINE IN PUPIL POPULATION, SUBURBAN DISTRICTS, WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, ARE STILL GROWING. FROM 1969 TO 1976, DENVER WENT FROM AN ENROLLMENT OF 97,000 CHILDREN TO A PRESENT PUPIL POPULATION OF SOME 72,000. THAT'S ABOUT 3,500 CHILDREN LOST PER YEAR.

ASIDE FROM THE IMPACT OF SUCH LOSSES ON BUDGETS SUCH AS DENVER'S, WHICH IS TIED TO NUMBERS OF CHILDREN SERVED, PUPIL LOSSES CREATE RIF SITUATIONS. SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST FACE A REDUCTION IN FORCE. RIF-ING ISN'T PLEASANT. WHO GOES FIRST? TENURE LAWS, TEACHER UNIONS, AND "ENTRENCHED" ADMINISTRATORS COMPLICATE AND MULTIPLY THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY BOARDS OF EDUCATION.

THE EMPTY CLASSROOMS IN DENVER'S SCHOOLS ARE CREATING PUBLIC CONCERN. IT'S A PARADOXICAL SITUATION IN WHICH ONE SEGMENT OF SOCIETY CRIES WASTE AND EXERTS PRESSURES FOR CLOSING SCHOOLS. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COMMUNITY ARISES "EN MASS" AT THE HINT OF CLOSING THE FOCAL POINT OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD.

WHILE TAKING A HARD LOOK AT FACILITY UTILIZATION THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, DENVER HAD TO EMBARK ON A BUILDING PROGRAM TO REPLACE OR REMODEL TURN OF THE CENTURY STRUCTURES FACING EDUCATIONAL OBSOLESCENCE.

BUILDING NEW SCHOOLS WHEN SOME ARE HALF EMPTY - - - IF YOU WANT A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM, TRY THAT ONE ON FOR SIZE!

WE'VE HAD TO BUILD IN AREAS WHERE THERE WERE NO SCHOOLS. IT'S DECISIONS SUCH AS THESE THAT REDUCE THE LONGEVITY OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION AS WELL AS SUPERINTENDENTS. IF ANYONE HERE HAS A MAGIC FORMULA, PLEASE SEE ME AFTER THE MEETING; YOUR FUTURE HAS JUST BEEN SECURED BY ABOUT EVERYONE AT THIS CONVENTION!

AS PUPIL POPULATION DECREASED IN DENVER, ANOTHER PHENOMENON OCCURRED. THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENT BODY CHANGED. WHILE THIS FACTOR IS GENERALLY BI-RACIAL IN MOST URBAN CENTERS, DENVER HAS A TRI-ETHNIC SITUATION.

. IN 1969, DENVER'S ANGLO POPULATION WAS ABOUT 62,000; IN 1976, 35,7000. THAT'S A 42% DECREASE.

. DURING THIS SAME PERIOD, THE BLACK SCHOOL POPULATION ROSE FROM 13,932 TO 14,892, A PLUS 6.9%.

. AND THE SPANISH SURNAMED (HISPANO) INCREASED 4.7% FROM 19,821 TO 20,752.

DENVER HAS BECOME A RACIAL MINORITY SCHOOL SYSTEM. BEING PERFECTLY CANDID ABOUT IT, THERE ARE SOME IN OUR COMMUNITY WHO WOULD ATTRIBUTE THE CHANGE TO THE DESEGREGATION ORDERS OF THE COURTS.

DENVER IS UNDER DESEGREGATION COURT ORDERS

DENVER'S DESEGREGATION STARTED BEFORE ORDERS OF THE COURTS WITH A VOLUNTARY OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICY. BY 1969, THE COURT ORDERED A DESEGREGATION PAIRING PROGRAM INVOLVING 25 SCHOOLS, THEN IN SUBSEQUENT ORDERS, INCREASED INVOLVEMENT TO 42 SCHOOLS IN 1974. FINALLY, COURT ORDERED DESEGREGATION BECAME DISTRICTWIDE, ROOT AND BRANCH. CERTAINLY THERE WAS SOME FLIGHT TO THE SUBURBS, BUT MANDATED DESEGREGATION ISN'T THE WHOLE STORY FOR DECREASED ENROLLMENT AND ETHNIC CHANGES. ASK YOURSELF - - -

. WHERE CAN THE MOST SOCIAL SERVICES BE FOUND?
. WHERE ARE PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS LOCATED?
. WHERE CAN A PERSON OF LIMITED ECONOMIC RESOURCES FIND REFUGE - - SERVICES - - EMPLOYMENT?

THE CITIES PROVIDE THE ANSWER, DON'T THEY? THE POOR, THE RACIAL MINORITIES, AND OTHERS IN NEED MIGRATE INWARD.

I HOPE YOU'VE HEARD OF THE SUCCESS OF DENVER'S DESEGREGATION PROCESS. WE DIDN'T HIT THE HEADLINES NOR THE PRIME TIME AIRWAYS. WE HAD A JOB TO DO AND GOT IT DONE. WE'RE STILL IN THE PROCESS. THIS

EFFORT TOOK PLANNING, AN INVOLVED PUBLIC, AND CERTAINLY A DEDICATED STAFF. BUT I WOULD BE TELLING ONLY HALF TRUTHS IF I DIDN'T ADMIT TO A SPLIT IN OUR COMMUNITY.

THE DIVISIVE FACTOR RESULTING FROM DESEGREGATION

LIKE THOSE SCARS OF THE CIVIL WAR, DENVER TOO HAS ITS DIFFICULTIES. CITIZENS IN THE COMMUNITY AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAVE DIVIDED INTO PRO AND CON CAMPS.

THERE ARE THOSE STILL TALKING OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND THOSE WHO THROW UP ROADBLOCKS TO ANY ACTIVITY THAT EVEN RESEMBLES DESEGREGATION. RACIAL ATTITUDES ARE DIFFICULT TO MODIFY, ALTHOUGH, MY FRIENDS, PROGRESS IS BEING MADE--SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS.

THE DENVER BOARD OF EDUCATION IS A PRODUCT OF A DIVIDED COMMUNITY AND, AS SUCH, IS ADMITTEDLY OPPOSED ON SEVERAL ISSUES.

ALTHOUGH IT'S BEEN RUMORED WE COULDN'T GET A UNANIMOUS VOTE ON THE TIME OF DAY, WE TOO ARE MAKING PROGRESS. POLITICALLY, WE COULDN'T BE FARTHER APART - - - THREE ON ONE SIDE, THREE ON THE OTHER, AND IN THE MIDDLE- - - BERNIE VALDEZ. YOU TALK ABOUT SCARS--I'VE HAD MORE THAN MY SHARE. THE DIVISIVENESS OF THE BOARD HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL ON THE ENERGIES OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND HAS WEAKENED THE CONFIDENCE OF THE COMMUNITY. THE CONTRACT OF THE LAST SUPERINTENDENT WAS TERMINATED EARLY AND WE NOW HAVE A NEW MAN, DR. JOE BRZEINSKI, WHO, BY THE WAY, RECEIVED A 7-0 VOTE OF SUPPORT FROM A DIVIDED BOARD OF EDUCATION. SEE WHAT I MEAN--PROGRESS IS BEING MADE.

ARE THERE ANSWERS?

EACH OF THE PROBLEMS I'VE MENTIONED COULD SERVE AS A CONVENTION TOPIC ALONE, AND I'M SURE HAVE ELEMENTS WHICH ARE COMMON CONCERNS TO ALL OF US.

- ARE THERE ANSWERS? CAN WE SOLVE
  - . THE "WE-THEY" SYNDROME OF STATE LEGISLATURES?
  - . THE SHRINKING FINANCIAL BASES OF CITIES?
  - . DIMINISHED DOLLAR VALUES AND INSENSITIVE FORMULAS FOR DOLLAR DISTRIBUTION?
- CAN WE TURN THE TIDE ON
  - . ANNEXATION MORATORIUMS?
  - . UNDER-FUNDING OF STATE AND FEDERALLY MANDATED PROGRAMS, OR
  - . THE RECORD OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS PROVIDING SEED MONEY FOR PROJECTS, THEN PULLING THE FINANCIAL RUG OUT FROM UNDER US WHEN THINGS ARE JUST BEING ACCEPTED?
- IS THERE A WAY TO EASE THE MUNICIPAL OVERBURDEN OF CITIES AND THEIR SCHOOLS?
- CAN THE OUTWARD TIDE OF PUPILS AND CITIZENS BE TURNED INWARD?
- CAN BOARDS OF EDUCATION MEET EXCLUSIVE OF THE POLITICAL ARENA?
- IS DESEGREGATION BECOMING A MOOT QUESTION IN SOME CITIES?

THE ANSWER TO THESE AND OTHER QUESTIONS FOREMOST IN THE MINDS OF CITY BOARDS OF EDUCATION IS ONE OF HOPEFUL EXPECTANCY. WITHOUT POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD THESE CHALLENGES, WE MIGHT AS WELL ALL CHARTER BOATS, GO FISHING, AND FORGET ABOUT EDUCATION.

PROGRESS NOW - - - A PATTERN FOR THE FUTURE

. LEGISLATION

IN DENVER, WE ARE MAKING INROADS. THE LEGISLATURE HAS RECENTLY ADMITTED THE CITY DOES HAVE SOME SPECIAL NEEDS AND WE HAVE TAKEN A MORE AGGRESSIVE LOBBYING STATURE. BEING FOREWARNED IS

NOW A MATTER OF SURVIVAL. CITIZENS TOO ARE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT CITY PROBLEMS AREN'T ORIGINATED TOTALLY FROM WITHIN.

WHERE PROBLEMS OF UNDERFUNDING ARE STATEWIDE, AS IN THE CASE OF MANDATED PROGRAMS, SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE BEGINNING TO EXHIBIT A UNITED FRONT.

DESEGREGATION - DIVISIVE FACTORS

TENSION AND DIVISIVENESS RESULTING FROM COURT-ORDERED DESEGREGATION IS DIMINISHING, AND EDUCATORS ARE BEING FREED TO RETURN TO THEIR MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY OF EDUCATING YOUTH.

CITIES ARE NOW IN DANGER OF BEING RESEGREGATED DUE TO A LACK OF ETHNIC BALANCE AVAILABLE. IT'S ALREADY HAPPENED ELSEWHERE. IN DENVER, WE ARE TRYING TO TURN THE TIDE INWARD. THE KEY IS A SCHOOL SYSTEM SO ATTRACTIVE BY COMPARISON THAT PARENTS WILL WANT TO RETURN TO THE CITY.

INFLATION AND SALARIES

FINANCIAL PRESSURES AGGRAVATED BY COST INCREASES AND SALARY DEMANDS ARE EASING. IN DENVER, OUR TEACHERS EVEN VOTED TO GIVE 1% OF THEIR 5% SALARY INCREASE BACK TO SCHOOLS TO HELP RELIEVE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY CLASS SIZE. TEACHER MILITANCY IS BEING REPLACED WITH A REALISTIC ATTITUDE TOWARD FINANCIAL RESPONSIVENESS.

HOPEFULLY, STATE AND FEDERAL SPENDING IS BECOMING MORE AWARE AND RESPONSIBLE. WE CAN'T SURVIVE DOUBLE-DIGIT ANNUAL COST-OF-LIVING INCREASES.

. RELEVANCY IN CURRICULUM

IN THIS ERA OF LIMITED DOLLARS, WE MUST EVALUATE THE RELEVANCY OF WHAT WE HAVE BEEN OFFERING. THE AREAS OF VOCATIONAL AND CAREER EDUCATION HAVE TAKEN ON GREATER MEANING AS MORE AND MORE OF THE CITY'S YOUTH LOOK TO THE SCHOOLS FOR JOB ORIENTED SKILLS. THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY COMMUNITIES HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPECT CERTAIN LEVELS OF COMPETENCIES IN POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES.

INVOLVEMENT IS THE KEY

IF WE, AS THOSE LEGALLY CHARGED WITH THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH, ARE TO LEAVE AN EDUCATIONAL LEGACY FOR FUTURE BOARDS OF EDUCATION, THEN THE PROCESS OF INVOLVEMENT MUST HAVE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY. WE MUST BECOME A PART OF ANYTHING THAT WILL AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO MEET OUR COMMITMENT.

WHETHER IT'S AT THE STATE, FEDERAL, OR "CONVENTION" LEVEL, IT'S UP TO US TO BE AWARE--CONCERNED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESSES.

INVOLVEMENT STARTS WITH THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, THEN PERMEATES THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. IF YOU WANT TO CLOSE SCHOOLS, REDUCE STAFF, DEFINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, DESEGREGATE, OR ELIMINATE OBSOLETE CURRICULUM--INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY.

I'LL GIVE YOU JUST A SAMPLE OF WHAT WE'RE DOING IN THAT DIRECTION. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECEIVES INPUT FROM INNUMERABLE SOURCES WHICH INCLUDE:

. BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEES AT EACH SCHOOL AND ON A CITYWIDE BASIS
. BLACK EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT AND THAT OF THE
. HISPANO EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

THE BOARD HAS COMMITTEES ON:

- EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION
- OUTDOOR EDUCATION
- FACILITY UTILIZATION
- COMMUNITY INFORMATION

AS A BOARD, WE HAVE REPRESENTATION ON THE CITY-SCHOOL COORDINATING COMMISSION AND ON SOME STATE COMMITTEES.

WHAT I'M SAYING IS, WE IN THE CITIES CAN NO LONGER FUNCTION IN ISOLATION. THE CITIZENS WANT TO BE INVOLVED AND DEMAND AN AUDIENCE. IN DENVER, WE HAVE ONE BOARD MEETING PER MONTH DEVOTED SOLELY TO GIVING ANY CITIZEN A CHANCE TO MAKE HIS FEELINGS OR CONCERNS KNOWN. (I'VE SEEN SUCH MEETINGS GO UNTIL ONE OR TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.)

INVOLVEMENT, TO BE SUCCESSFUL, MUST BE MEANINGFUL. CITIZENS NO LONGER CARRY AROUND RUBBER STAMPS; INDEED, CLUBS MIGHT BE MUCH MORE COMMON.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS MUST SOMEHOW BECOME MORE UNITED IN THEIR EFFORTS. PROGRESS BECOMES DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE WITH PULLING THE ROPE IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, OR TRYING TO PUT THIS ROPE AROUND A SUPERINTENDENT'S NECK. LET'S FACE IT, A COMMUNITY UNITED IN ITS SUPPORT OF EDUCATION MUST START AT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION LEVEL. WE ARE THE PACE SETTERS. WE ESTABLISH THE CLIMATE AND HAVE THE POWER TO EFFECT CHANGE.

IN DENVER, OUR FOCUS IS TURNING FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT, AND WE ARE LOOKING TO THE LEGACY OF THE FUTURE.